

ROLE OF HEALTH PROMOTION IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

A school is a unique place, where young people learn, develop and socialize. It is an institution where basic knowledge of the world and social life is shared. It is an organisation which has a real impact on creating equal opportunities and on an individual's later life. The school system has a significant impact on all individuals and their social development, making it the subject of countless discussions and frequent assessments.

For over 25 years Poland has been making constant changes in its education system. It is the sector that undergoes the most frequent and most extensive reforms. Decision makers change its structure, form and teaching contents, subjecting the system to continuous evaluation. The aim is to improve the conditions and quality of teaching. While looking for efficient solutions, decision makers have been relying on economic management sciences, focusing on financial and material resources and on improving the technical infrastructure of schools. Over time they started to notice that such solutions are insufficient, so they began to direct their attention to the concept of educational leadership, based on specific values, with comprehensive student development in the very heart of the process.

Keywords: educational leadership, educational management, health education, health management, health promotion

1. EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES BASED ON POLAND'S EXAMPLE

We should remember that a school is an educational institution focusing on the fulfilment of teaching tasks and objectives, as well as caring for and raising children, youth and adults. Well-qualified staff, parents, environment, structural and educational facilities all play an important role in the achievement of its goals (Stankiewicz, 2000). Sajdak adds that “the aim of educational activity is to support the learner in the realisation of their own potential” (Sajdak, 2013, p. 356), while the educational environment needs to be facilitating and responsive to the needs of learners. Whereas “teaching strategies need to be directed at joint achievement of educational objectives and at satisfying the needs of students” (Sajdak, 2013, p. 356).

For the sake of clarity it should be noted that a school operates within the scope of three basic functions: teaching, upbringing, caring. The school's teaching function involves systematic and orderly transfer of academic knowledge. The upbringing function is linked directly to the development of the pupil's personality and to shaping pro-social, moral and idealistic attitudes; it develops sensitivity and tolerance; prepares the student for leading an active life in the society. Whereas the caring function is related to providing students with necessary care, creating the right environment for learning and resting, and looking after their wellbeing and safety (Maniek, 2016). Therefore, a school can only achieve success if all actions in all these areas are coordinated. However, a successful school is also, from the perspective of management, an organisation whose management structure is flattened; authority is delegated appropriately; resources are managed reasonably; time is well-spent; data on teaching performance is well-managed; focus is placed on educational foundations. Such a school also acts as a training centre for teachers. It is a school where people enjoy positive relations and where all special needs of students are met; it is also a place which creates a structured, aesthetic and most of all safe environment (Elsner, 2006). The importance of safety was also highlighted by Maniek, whose research showed that in order for a school's didactic process to run correctly, the school needs to be safe (Maniek, 2016, p. 58), which indicated the aspect schools have been focusing on in recent years.

In order to satisfy the numerous requirements with regard to schools, Poland drew inspiration from economic management, attempting to bring some of the solutions used in the world of economy straight into the educational sector. As noted by Dorczak, “educational management has been in development for several decades, in terms of Poland since the early 90's. Similarly to other countries, the development of managerial thought in education has been dominated (and still seems to be dominated) by attempts to build theory and practice based on a simple transfer of solutions from general management theory in its most common form,

which dominated that arena in the context of the neoliberal ideology of the 80's. This managerial approach mainly focuses on the formal, legal, financial, organisational and technical aspects of school management, considered the key to increasing efficiency and quality of the school's operation. Moreover, it is also considered obvious that different theories with practical solutions and management techniques developed with regard to organising the economic sphere can be used in any other sphere, such as education" (Dorczak, 2016, p. 7). It should also be stressed that the last 25 years have been a period of significant, continuous changes in Polish education. Such reforms covered different aspects of the operation of the education system, such as curricula, school system structure, grading and examination methods, pedagogical supervision methods, teacher training and many other detailed issues, making school staff feel tired and discouraged (Dorczak, 2015b, p. 11).

Therefore, in recent years Poland has been focusing on perfecting technical aspects, providing the right infrastructure and the best facilities; however, people are slowly running out of ideas on what to do to make school operations even more beneficial to the society; on what to do, as noted by Mazurkiewicz, to ensure that educational management truly helps organisations and individuals learn, which should lead to individual, organizational and social development (Mazurkiewicz, 2011, p. 195). What to do to ensure that schools contribute even more to the individual and common good? The solution may be educational leadership based on values as well as recognition of the role and meaning of health promotion in schools.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

To summarise the considerations presented to this point, "there is no doubt that if a school is to work well in an increasingly difficult and demanding environment, it needs efficient leaders" (Madalińska-Michalak, Kołodziejczyk, 2015, p. 131). According to Maniek's research, expectations with regard to school principals are growing continuously. They need to act efficiently, quickly and fairly; they need to provide support and motivation to other teachers; they should promote multidirectional communication at school between teachers and pupils (Maniek, 2016, p. 60). Therefore, principals have to go beyond everyday administration of a complex organisation; they need to play the role of teaching leaders and local community leaders, at the same time acting as visionaries who inspire and motivate others to act on an everyday basis (Maniek, 2016, p. 60). Therefore, an educational leader should be someone "who, most of all, has the gift of persuasion and the power to bring out other people's potential. It is possible because such a leader can adopt the right

approach towards himself, the world and the school through self-discovery and awareness of the role, needed to build a self-learning school” (Mazurkiewicz, 2011, p. 55). Moreover, an educational leader also needs to know how to make people learn (Mazurkiewicz, 2011, p. 2015).

However, most of all we should remember that educational leadership should complement management. Educational leadership and management introduce the value in learning and in individual development (Dorczak, 2015a, p. 50). “A school principal, who plays her/her role well, in the scope of school management processes places focus on the implementation of tasks and achieving results (management), as well as on people and processes (leadership). While seeking managerial standards, they keep the balance between leadership and management, believing that these processes complement each other and help create a school which becomes an attractive facility for its pupils and teachers working for the benefit of those pupils. The leadership of a school principal, due to the area of social life it relates to (education) and its potential to drive changes and development of individuals, teams, institutions, organisations, networks and systems on various levels, should be an educational leadership not only because the school is where education takes place, but mainly because of the educational objectives and characteristics of that leadership” (Madalińska-Michalak, Kołodziejczyk, 2015, p. 132).

Therefore, “an investment in leadership is an investment in the future of education (...). The education systems and schools we know have exhausted their potential of creating and changing the world. Educational leadership, open to people, their needs and skills, gives us hope that as always people will be able to cope with even the most difficult tasks – thanks to creativity, imagination, cooperation and courage” (Mazurkiewicz, 2015, p. 52). Especially that a school may become a source of social change (Mazurkiewicz, 2011, p. 254), so in line with the responsible school principle (see Mazurkiewicz, 2011, p. 116) we should consider expanding the role of health promotion in the educational leadership process. We should take responsibility for creating specific solutions and constructing the reality (Mazurkiewicz, 2011, pp. 279–280) in the scope of health promotion already at the level of early school education.

3. ROLE OF HEALTH PROMOTION IN THE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROCESS

It should be noted that the basic obligation of the state is not only to provide its citizens with access to healthcare services when they are faced with an illness or suspected illness, but also to take actions, such as:

- actions aimed at shaping desired health-oriented behaviours;
- reparative actions to remove pathogens, minimise their effects and compensate for any dysfunctions caused by them;
- preventative actions directed at minimising and removing the threat of disease (Wojtczak, 2009, pp. 9–12).

Those tasks should be implemented already at the primary school stage and continued throughout the educational process, as only in this way can we ensure their efficiency.

Although we should remember that irrespective of healthcare programmes implemented on the national and local stage, the law describes the organisation of preventative healthcare services for children in mandatory school education, other mandatory education and children in post-secondary education according to the regulation of the Minister of Health of 28 August 2009 on the organisation of preventative healthcare services for children and youth (Journal of Laws of 2009 no. 139 item 1133), which indicates that such healthcare services may be provided, among other, by school nurses (Bromber et al., 2015, p. 45). However, health promotion activities should be implemented in schools on a much wider scale than a rare contact between the children and the school nurse during routine preventative check-ups or sporadic lectures. It is an important aspect, as a social study from 2014 (Bromber et al.) indicates that Polish citizens have a very negative opinion on the Polish healthcare system, which means that probably it does not do its job, thus the role and significance of health promotion at the early education stage is growing and should be embedded in the idea of educational leadership, which has potential to change the Polish reality for the better. The need to introduce the idea of health promotion at an early age arises from not only the popularity of unhealthy lifestyles, but also from the fact that many risky behaviours are a result of a lack of knowledge, bad habits or trends (Korporowicz, 2015, pp. 148–150).

For the sake of clarity we should also remember what health promotion actually is. Namely, “it is a social process of an educational character, aimed at improving the society’s health (...)”. It should be added though that these days health promotion goes beyond shaping knowledge and skills with regard to health-oriented behaviours, which are also the subject of health education, as the former also includes creating environments favourable to health and getting the members of the society actively involved in matters related to health, while also providing information and educating health managers and promoters (...). In accordance with the principles of health promotion:

- health needs to be protected from threats, as well as strengthened and developed through social activity, through the use of different methods and manners of communication, implementation of the principles of education, social policy and health policy; (...)
- health should be strengthened by way of active participation of all individuals and a close cooperation with the social environment, i.e. school, home and workplace (Korporowicz, 2015, pp. 149–150).

This is a form of a developing, democratic approach to health, which is evidenced by the new tasks imposed on school, family and self-government that require actions integrated within the individual areas of interest. “As part of these actions, the society, especially the youth, should be taught how to cope with difficult situations and stress, and at the same time be protected from turning to additions or – which started occurring in recent years – from excessive beautification of their own bodies and medicalization of the social life” (Korporowicz, 2015, p. 153). It should be noted that some activities within that scope have already been implemented as a result of the First Convention on the European Network of Health-Promoting Schools from 1997, during which such conclusions were made as:

- every young person living in Europe has the right to learn in a health-promoting school, which is a sign of the democratisation of public life;
- a health-promoting school is an initiative aimed at developing education and democracy on the local level (see Korporowicz, 2015, pp. 160–161).

As a result of the conference, a document entitled „Health21 – Health for all in the 21st century” was created, based on which many projects were developed to support the idea of health promotion in local communities. One of the main objectives of the project was to establish “health-promoting schools”, which combine collective health education (among youth, teachers, workers) with a health ethos at school and actions aimed at improving health and wellbeing of the entire school community. The principles which need to be followed for such a school to function correctly are:

- health education, which needs to be implemented and integrated with the curriculum;
- consistency between health education implemented at school and observations made at the school premises, i.e. consistency between the educational

contents and declarations and actions taken not only in the school environment, but also in the family environment;

- health-oriented actions performed in an atmosphere favourable to learning, rest and mutual acceptance between teachers and students;
- cooperation between students, teachers, parents and local authorities in creating health-oriented environments;
- health ethos at school and mutual respect and kindness among students, teachers and school workers expressed through cooperation, honesty, support, communication, joint decision-making and responsibility;
- transparency of the rules of conduct, principles, hierarchy and structure linked to a transparency of regulations, procedures and methods of their enforcement;
- independence linked to autonomy and courage in thinking, expressing one's opinions and feelings, and conduct;
- building a safe and democratic environment favourable to physical, psychological and social development of all students;
- creating the basis for change and modification of behaviour, conduct, learning, teaching and school management;
- jointly organising and participating in meetings and events dedicated to health (Korporowicz, 2015, pp. 160–164).

In order to implement such a system, cooperation between students, teachers, workers, parents and local authorities is required, which is also an issue discussed in terms of progressive health management (Korporowicz, 2015, p. 27), taking into account local influential factors, i.e. recognising the role of active cooperation and participation of local communities in deciding on how social needs can be satisfied, including most of all health-related needs.

To summarise these considerations it should also be added that the Polish health protection system also faces various challenges related to the growing problem of insufficient resources (Kautsch, 2015, p. 555), growing patient expectations, growing prevalence of lifestyle diseases and ageing society. At the same time it seems that educational management and leadership have already exhausted their capacity for further development of the school as an organization and of its students, therefore, it is necessary to seek new areas of activity to help improve and broaden the learning process. A solution to the problems found in both sectors: health protection and education, may be health promotion, implemented systematically and consistently as part of the educational leadership process at Polish schools.

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